

# Academic Librarian as A Scientists' Partner: an Author's Best Practice

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**Abstract**— It is acknowledged that every phase of the industrialization has influenced human life. In the field of information, for example, the presence of the internet and mobile technology has enabled people to access information from around the globe independently. I feel compelled to conduct a study on my best practices in dealing with the change of information seeking behavior of library users. This article discusses partnership strategies of university librarian in responding to the shifts of college paradigm from "Wall Class University" to World Class University. This change certainly has a very significant impact on the library. The library should be the gateway to the change. Librarians as agents of change must be able to respond to these changes wisely and intelligently. Due to the change of university paradigm as systemic and comprehensive then one effective strategy is to build an active partnership between librarians and lecturers and students as campus scientist community. What are the strategies and forms of interactive partnerships that should be built? This case study made use the author himself to gather the data by observing the librarians and library users. It also relied on my best practices during my career as an academic librarian at the Ar-Raniry State Islamic University library in Banda Aceh. The data were then analyzed qualitatively using the concepts and theories of library and information science. The study indicated that the academic library as a scientific partner of the students has very important role in connecting them to the reading sources. Therefore, the college librarians as scientific partners should be responsive to changes in the paradigm of higher education; proactively detect, evaluate and find effective solutions by utilizing all their potencias; and professional in conducting their jobs.

**Keywords**—*academic librarian, partnership, research university, information technology*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Before starting a discussion about the strategy of building partnerships in a college library, it is interesting to look at an African proverb that says, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. This saying does provide an alternative to choose whether the speed or breadness of access becomes priority. In the context of library services, this choice is indeed a dilemma because ideally both speed and broadness (fast and far) are both targets of modern library services. But if one really has to choose, then togetherness (go together) should be prioritized. This is in accordance with the philosophy of librarianship. Librarianship is a blend of art and science in the procurement, preservation, organization and retrieval of

information, both written and audio-visual, which aims to maximize access to and use of information for the broadest community. [1]

Furthermore, André Cossette, as quoted by Rory Litwin [2], emphasizes that the technical development efforts of the library are very important, but it is also very important to note the final goal of a library. "It is important, to be sure, to work for the improvement of the techniques used in libraries, but it is also important to take interest in the ends that we want to achieve by them" [3]. From the explanation above it is clear that technical and non-technical activities determine the achievement of library objectives as expected.

## II. METHOD

This case study made use the author himself to gather the data by observing the librarians and library users. It also relied on my best practices during my career as an academic librarian at the Ar-Raniry State Islamic University library in Banda Aceh. During the academic year of 2018-2019, as an academic librarian I also conducted a participatory observation in the library. All important information about the library users' behavior, and how other librarians did their jobs were recorded. The data were then analysed qualitatively using the concepts and theories of library and information science.

## III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### A. The Purpose of Higher Education Library

The main purpose of college library is to support the implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, namely learning, research, and community service. To achieve this goal, the college library describes its functions as follows; education, information, research, recreation, publication and deposit functions.

In more detail, [4] divides the purpose of the college library into five main tasks: (1) mmeeting the information needs of the college community, teaching staff, students, including college administration staff. (2) providing library materials (reference) at all academic levels. (3) providing learning space for library users. (4) providing appropriate information lending services for various types of users. (5) providing active information services that are not only limited to the university environment.

If it is noted that all library functions are related to the external library. For this reason, evaluation, coordination and collaboration between librarians and the campus community are needed. Therefore the concept of partnership is very important to be considered by college librarians. If this is ignored, it can be ascertained that these functions will not run optimally.

Meeting these demands is indeed not an easy matter. In order for these expectations to be realized, the library must be supported at least by three main elements: visionary library leaders, reliable librarians and supportive budgets. Most libraries have these three elements. However, these three elements have not yet fully synergized, resulting in an imbalance in some library and archival activities. Based on this problem, the author will share experiences related to the strategy of capacity building and the role of librarians as scientific partners on campus.

### B. Development of Librarian Capacity

Librarian capacity is the key to success in facing changes in this disruptive era. Increasing librarian capacity in terms of management and technical librarianship must always be considered in an effort to respond to library and information changes. These two aspects must always be kept in balance.

To maximize the role of librarians in serving the community, librarians are required to have a qualified librarianship capacity. The role that is intended here is the attitude or behavior of librarians who are ready to serve and able to help the information needs of users according to their time. Along with the development of information and communication technology today, librarians are also required to have capacity in the field of information technology and library collaboration (networking). Librarians must have knowledge of the automation system, the concept of digitization and promotion of services so that library collaboration both at local, regional and international levels is possible. To realize all these big demands, good strategies and goals are needed.

### C. Defining partnership

Partners is defined as (1) "friends, friends; (2) work partners, co-workers, colleagues ". While the partnership itself is defined as "matters of relations (the fabric of cooperation and so on) as partners". From this understanding, the word partner is categorized into several types according to the field of partnership that is implemented: business partners, working partners, training partners, playing partners, sparring partners, business partners and speech partners, which are "partner groups that can be invited to discuss, dialogue, and negotiate." [5]

This concept is in accordance with the view of modern management, where sharing vision and mission is a condition of the success of an organization. In the context of the library, librarians are obliged to communicate the vision and mission of the library clearly to potential users of the college library, namely the academic community, students and other campus communities. By understanding the purpose and direction of

the library, it will enable the campus community to actively participate in supporting the library's vision and mission.

### D. Library Partnership

The term partnership is more often used in the business world, which can be seen from the following definition "A partnership is a relationship between two or more persons who join to carry on a trade or business. Each person contributes to money, property, labor or skills, and expects to share in profits and losses of business."

At first glance this term seems a paradox to be used in the context of a library known as a non-profit organization. But basically the term partnership is relevantly used in the context of the library for the following two reasons; (1) that in principle the concept of partnership is not only money and property that can be shared, but also energy and expertise; (2) most librarians do not use the principle of profit and loss in the library. Librarians do not feel lucky if the library is visited and utilized a lot, and also does not feel loss if it is less visited by users, or even vice versa, feel fortunate if there are few visitors because they can be more relaxed while surfing.

It is believed that many university libraries have established partnerships, both with internal and external institutions. It's just that the nature is still passive (silent partnership). The partnership that exists is only in formality. This partnership will not be effective because it is seasonal and depends on interests. The partnership that needs to be built ideally is an interactive partnership. In other words, the partnership relationship built between college librarians and academics must be mutually needed and mutually beneficial.

The partnership of college librarians can be formed by creating learning designs; making research designs, developing research tools, collecting research report data; looking for research sponsors. Furthermore, he groups partnerships between librarians and lecturers into four fields: policy, research, curriculum, high level supervision, and academic development. [6]

### E. Building Partnership

Here are some examples of partnerships that have been successfully carried out by the library of Ar-Raniry State Islamic University (Banda Aceh). To make it easier I have categorized them as follows.

#### 1) Internal Partnership

a) *Partnership in the library committee.* The partnership in the library committee is a partnership by involving academics in the library committee. The participants are those who love library (Library Lover Clubs) who are proactive and have concern for library development.

b) *Academic partnership.* Academic partnerships are partnerships in helping lecturers and students in the teaching and learning process. This type of partnership abroad is better known as the Liason Librarian Program activity, a program involving librarians who have special competencies to help lecturers teach information literacy classes or other related topics, usually held for 2 meetings. Besides class-based

academic partnerships, it is also based on libraries (Library Based Learning). Sometimes lecturers ask librarians to guide their students in the library according to the topics given.

c) *Partnership in research.* The partnership in research is the collaboration of librarians and scientists in conducting research. Librarians and Scientists share assignments in conducting research. Sometimes librarians are only asked to help gathering reading resources only, and often librarians become members of the researcher. It depends on the scope and type of research.

d) *Partnership in publication.* The intended publication partnership is the collaboration of scientists (writers), students (readers), with librarians (executors). These activities are carried out monthly in the Montly Book Review program.

e) *Partnership with students.* Partnerships with students are professional information volunteers or VIP (Information Volunteer Professional). This partnership helps distributing the latest information in the form of Current Awareness Services (CAS).

## 2) External Partnership

a) *Partnership with The Asia Foundation (2006).* Responding to the Information Technology needs in library, the Ar-Raniry IAIN library established a partnership with The Asia Foundation (TAF) in 2006 to build an electronic-based Library Information Management System (SIMPUS) with a total amount of funds reaching around seven hundred millions rupiah.

b) *Partnership with PDII-LIPI (2013).* It is a partnership in building cooperation with the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) to improve accessibility in scientific journals under the name Ar-Raniry-LIPI Corner program. The aim of this partnership is for the academic community and the general public to access thousands of scientific journals online and offline.

c) *Partnership with Disdikpora Aceh Jaya (2015).* In the 2015 *Aceh Jaya Cerdas* series, the Aceh Jaya District Youth and Sports Education Department invited UIN Ar-Raniry

librarians to become partners in the 2015 *Aceh Jaya Cerdas* program through a school library development program package. The package consists of training, monitoring and evaluation, certification, selection of outstanding libraries, awards and fostering a model library. All school library managers were given training on library management and technical library materials. After the training they were given two weeks to rearrange the library in accordance with the knowledge gained from the training. After that a team would monitor, evaluate and choose the outstanding library.

## IV. CONCLUSION

College librarians as scientific partners must be responsive to changes in the paradigm of higher education. Librarians must proactively detect, evaluate and find effective solutions by utilizing all the potential they have to guarantee various aspects of library services, from the selection process to the information retrieval process. College librarians must be confident and professional in conducting their jobs, attractive in serving and competent in using technology media. This attitude is very important because as expressed by the Father of the Indian library that professional librarians are librarians who are able to connect between readers and reading sources.

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